

The Voter Empowerment Act

Fact Sheet

In light of the continuing challenges to the exercise of our most foundational Constitutional right, The Voter Empowerment Act (“VEA”) has been designed to modernize the American electoral system by providing improved access to the ballot, enhanced integrity in our voting systems and greater accountability for the administration of our elections. A product of a broad coalition of Members, caucuses and advocacy groups, this legislation will address the unprecedented efforts to turn back the clock and erect barriers to voting for military, disabled, minority, young, elderly and low-income Americans.

1. ACCESS

Modernizing the Registration System

- Our current system is vulnerable to mistakes and manipulation. Making use of available technology, the Voter Empowerment Act will automatically and permanently enroll all consenting eligible voters, update changes in address or name, and include built-in fail-safe measures to correct problems quickly and easily while protecting personal privacy. A modernized registration system would improve efficiency, ensure better access, and prevent election officials from being overwhelmed on Election Day.

Ensure Online Voter Registration Access

- Making online registration an option, the Voter Empowerment Act would lift constraints on time and transportation, making it possible for any eligible voter to register.

Allowing Same Day Registration

- Voters are often unaware that they are not registered until turned away from the polls. The Voter Empowerment Act would allow new and currently registering voters to update or correct their information on election-day. Same day registration, which already exists in ten states, would prevent those voices from going unheard.

Assisting Voters With Disabilities

- A disability should never serve as a barrier to the ballot box. The Voter Empowerment Act would help alleviate any additional burdens for people with disabilities by providing additional tools to vote.

Restoring the Right to Vote

- The right to vote should not be denied or abridged because an individual has been convicted of a criminal offense. The Voter Empowerment Act declares the right to vote and establishes a uniform national standard for citizens voting in federal elections who are not incarcerated at the time of the election.

Encouraging Youth to Become Voters

- The Voter Empowerment Act will require all universities that receive federal funds to offer and encourage voter registration to their students. This bill also allows for the registration of citizens under the age of 18 if they reach voting age prior to the next election.

Ensuring Military and Overseas Americans are Counted

- Defending democracy abroad should not mean giving up your fundamental democratic right to vote at home. The Voter Empowerment Act simplifies registration and makes sure the ballots from all military personnel serving overseas make it home.

Notifying Voters When Changes are Made

- Registered voters must be notified if the location of their polling place changes.

2. INTEGRITY

Restoring Trust in Elections Officials

- Public officials in charge of elections would not be allowed to participate in political campaigns. The people who administer elections must not have a vested interest in the outcome.

Providing Informed and Reliable Poll Workers

- Most Election Day problems can be avoided by recruiting high-quality poll workers and giving them the necessary training. The Voter Empowerment Act authorizes funds for training poll workers and sets standards for polling places practices.

Counting Every Vote

- The Voter Empowerment Act requires that provisional ballots be available and counted at all polling places.

Prohibiting Voter Caging

- The Voter Empowerment will designate voter caging – sending mail to purge or challenge a voter’s registration on the basis that the voter does not have legal residence – as a felony and requires that any voter challenge by persons other than election officials be based on personal, first-hand knowledge.

Protecting Voters from Deceptive Practices and Intimidation

- Every American citizen deserves the right to cast his or her ballot free from intimidation and misinformation designed to abridge their right to vote. The Voter Empowerment Act would clearly define and criminalize deceptive electioneering practices designed to prevent or mislead citizens on their way to the polls.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

Creating a National Voter Hotline

- If something does go wrong, a national hotline will make sure problems are reported, corrected, and prevented in real time.

Ensuring Votes are Counted Correctly

- The Voter Empowerment Act would set standards for voting machines, confirm to voters that they have cast a ballot for their intended candidate, and provide a paper copy for verification while respecting voter privacy.

Guaranteeing Fair Elections

- The Voter Empowerment Act reauthorizes the Election Assistance Commission, the only agency with election administration expertise, to make sure the highest standards are being met nationwide.